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SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/30/2017

TAGS: PHUM PREL UNHRC UY

SUBJECT: URUGUAY DEMARCHED ON BELARUS UNHRC CANDIDACY

REF: STATE 58054

Classified By: Charge D'Affaires James D. Nealon
for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) On May 8, Charge raised reftel demarche with the MFA's Secretary General Ambassador Jose Luis Cancela, stressing the

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need to keep human rights violators such as Belarus off the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). Cancela who appeared keenly interested in the subject said that Uruguay "had its reputation on human rights to maintain" and requested written points to help make the case against Belarus. (Comment: Cancela seemed to imply that the old-line socialist Foreign Minister Reinaldo Gargano, might need some convincing on Belarus. End Comment.)

¶2. (C) On May 3, Political Counselor discussed reftel demarche with the MFA's acting Director for Multilateral Affairs Beatriz Nunez who acknowledged that the GOU had received a formal request for support from Belarus. She said that Uruguay had "no problem" in supporting Slovenia. However, she revealed no preference for a third candidate with strong democratic credentials that Uruguay might propose at the May 17 GA elections in New York. Nunez also commented that the MFA was "well aware" that Belarus was one of the "world's worst human rights violators along with Burma."

¶3. (C) On May 2, per instructions reftel, PolCouns consulted with UK embassy (DCM John Pearson) about the possibility of presenting a joint demarche to the MFA. Pearson confirmed that the UK did not want to specifically name Belarus in its demarche. He then requested that the US Embassy present its demarche to the MFA first. Pearson also asked that he be allowed to coordinate the UK demarche with the French Embassy, since both "are members of the EU." We agreed to both proposals.

¶4. (C) Note: On April 24, Special Representative for Social Issues Ambassador Grover Joseph Rees III raised the issue of Belarus' UNHRC candidacy with the Deputy Foreign Minister Maria "Belela" Herrera and other senior MFA officials present during his meeting with them. Their response at that time was not fully clear, though Herrera recognized problems with Belarus' human rights record. End Note.
Nealon